

## Group I: What Are Human Rights?

*"Human rights are those rights that belong to every individual—man or woman, girl or boy, infant or elder—simply because she or he is a human being. They embody the basic standards without which people cannot realize their inherent human dignity"*

- Human rights are **universal**: they are the birthright of every member of the human family. No one has to earn or deserve human rights.
- Human rights are **inalienable**: you cannot lose these rights any more than you can cease to be a human being.
- Human rights are **indivisible**: you cannot be denied a right because someone decides that it is "less important" or "non-essential."
- Human rights are **interdependent**: all human rights are part of a complementary framework.



Because human rights are not granted by any human authority such as a monarch, government, or secular or religious authority, they are not the same as civil rights, such as those in the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. Constitutional rights are granted to individuals by virtue of their citizenship or residence in a particular country whereas human rights are inherent and held as attributes of the human personality.

Human rights are both abstract and practical. They hold up the inspiring vision of a free, just, and peaceful world and set minimum standards for how both individuals and institutions should treat people. They also empower people to take action to demand and defend their rights and the rights of others.

Flowers, Nancy: The Human Rights Education Handbook. Effective Practices for Learning, Action, and Change. Human Rights Education<sup>4</sup>, The Human Rights Resource Center, Minnesota 2000, p.13.

- Some 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are currently working, according to the International Labour Office (ILO). Of this total, some 120 million children are working full-time. Some 61% of child workers (153 million) are found in Asia; 32% in Africa and 7% in Latin America.
- Around the world, people who are fighting for basic rights such as free speech and political participation are intimidated, tortured, and even killed. In the year 2000, Human Rights Watch reported political killings in 61 countries. Prisoners of conscience were detained in 63 countries, and torture of political prisoners was reported from 125 countries.
- Protestors of repressive governments across the Middle East and North Africa have been killed, beaten, and arrested by police in the streets for voicing their opinions of reforms.
- More than 300,000 children under the age of 18 are being exploited as child soldiers in armed conflicts worldwide.  
<http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-human-rights-violations>



1. What are Human Rights?
2. Does everybody have Human Rights?
3. Are Human Rights worth fighting for? Why?